

M.A. Dementeva, I.N. Kabanova  
Linguistics University of Nizhny Novgorod  
Nizhny Novgorod, Russia

## **LANGUAGE WORLD VIEW OF THE AMERICAN YOUTH OF THE 50-60s OF THE XX CENTURY BASED ON THE ANALYSIS OF THE BEAT - GENERATION LITERATURE**

**Abstract:** The article considers specific characteristics of the language world view of the linguosociety under research and the concepts implemented in the literature of the Beat Generation. Cognitive approach to the study of concepts as constituent parts of the national conceptual sphere allows to single out universal concept (freedom), relatively specific concepts (home, road) and absolutely specific concepts (madness, addiction) organized in a system.

**Keywords:** language world view, concept, the beat generation, cognitive linguistics, psycholinguistics.

М.А. Дементьева, И.Н. Кабанова  
Нижегородский государственный лингвистический университет  
имени Н.А. Добролюбова  
Нижний Новгород, Россия

## **ЯЗЫКОВАЯ КАРТИНА МИРА АМЕРИКАНСКОЙ МОЛОДЕЖИ 50-60 гг. XX ВЕКА НА МАТЕРИАЛЕ ЛИТЕРАТУРЫ БИТ – ПОКОЛЕНИЯ**

**Аннотация:** В статье рассматриваются характерные особенности языковой картины мира указанного лингвосоциума, а также исследуются ключевые концепты на материале литературы бит-поколения. Лингвокогнитивный подход к исследованию

концептов как части национальной концептосферы позволяет выделить универсальный концепт (freedom), относительно специфические концепты (home, road) и абсолютно специфические концепты (madness, addiction), которые представляют собой части единой концептуальной системы.

**Ключевые слова:** языковая картина мира, концепт, литература бит-поколения, лингвокогнитивный подход, когнитивная лингвистика, психолингвистика.

The language world view is a system of ideas about the surrounding world represented in the consciousness of an individual or a certain society. It is traditionally accepted that the language world view can be studied through analysis of concepts as its components. This opinion justifies the fact that a concept is a kind of synthesis of ideas about surrounding reality in the mind of the concept holder. According to Yu. Stepanov, a concept can be presented, on the one hand, as a *«slot of cultures in the Human Consciousness: the way culture enters the mental world of man»*, and, on the other hand, *«as the way by which man enters culture, and in some cases affects it»*. [2] Researchers believe that one of the most accurate methods of research in this field is **semantic – cognitive analysis** suggested by the Russian linguists Ivan Sternin and Zinaida Popova. It includes the following research stages:

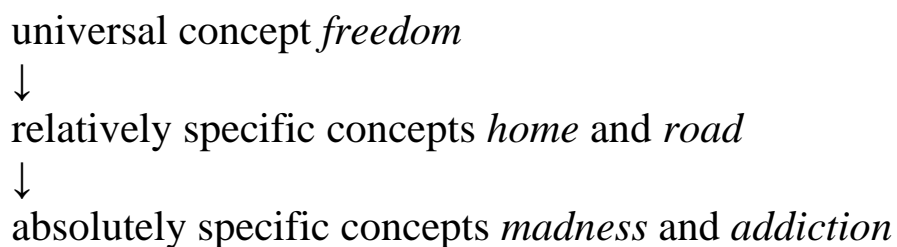
1. Construction of the nominative concept field.
2. Analysis and description of the semantics of language means included into the nominative concept field.
3. Cognitive interpretation of the results of description of language semantic means – identifying cognitive signs that form the concept as a mental unit.
4. Verification of the cognitive descriptions obtained from native speakers [1].

This method was used by the authors of this article in the study of the language world view of the American youth of the 50-60s of the XX century, which allows distinguishing the features of the language consciousness of this linguosociety in a most accurate and detailed way.

The following literary works of writers of the Beat – Generation served as language material for this research: «On the Road» (1951) and

«The Dharma Bums» (1958) by Jack Kerouac, «Naked Lunch» (1959) by William S. Burroughs.

The study highlights several key concepts of the language world view of the American youth of the 50-60s of the XX century which can be labeled as universal, relatively specific and absolutely specific according to their frequency of occurrence in the linguistic material. It may be illustrated by the following scheme:



The concept *freedom* is the main concept of the language world view under research because in each of the studied literary works it is possible to meet its various language manifestations. *Home* and *road* are concepts that are relatively specific because they are not as common as the main concept *freedom*, they manifest themselves as its components, being in close relationship with it. The concepts *madness* and *addiction* are absolutely specific concepts to linguistic consciousness of the linguosociety under research.

According to the algorithm of semantic – cognitive analysis, the construction of the nominative field is undertaken as a first step of concept research. For this stage it is necessary to establish a key concept nomination. Usually it is a word that is stylistically neutral and devoid of connotations from the point of view of its semantics. In our case, it is the word *freedom*.

As a next step, one has to single out the nominative field core which implies the inclusion of the most relevant associations with the concept. For the key nomination *freedom* it is possible to supply a number of synonyms that can be included in the core of the nominative concept field and which are easily found in the monolingual English dictionaries as well as in the studied literary works. They are: *independence* (36)<sup>1</sup>, *ability* (29), *opportunity* (12), *right* (15), *facility* (5), *power* (9), *privilege* (5), *full swing* (1), *own accord* (1).

---

<sup>1</sup> In the brackets the frequency of occurrence of the words in linguistic material is given.

A next step presupposes establishing the periphery of the nominative concept field which consists of the lexical units (words, word combinations) that are used as nominations of the concept *freedom* by individual authors: *mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved; wild; brawling; with abundance; everything ahead of me; driving away from people; it's good bye; beneath the skies; experience; rich with possibility; raggedy madness; riot of our actual lives; away from home; without getting tired of it; keep rolling under the stars; a grapy dusk; at the dividing line between the East of my youth and the West of my future; the point of ecstasy; timeless shadows; wonderment in the bleakness of the mortal realm; anonymity in the world; disappear somewhere; pathos; joy, kicks; disillusioned.*

The analysis and description of the semantics of language means included in the nominative concept field is considered as a further stage of the semantic-cognitive research. To implement this stage, we applied to the componential method of analysis of vocabulary definitions, taken from the following English monolingual dictionaries: *the Oxford Dictionary, Cambridge Dictionary, Collins English Dictionary, Macmillan Dictionary.*

Table – The componential analysis of the lexeme «freedom»

<i>freedom</i>	<b>the right to do what you want, make your own decisions, and express your own opinions</b>	<b>the state of not being imprisoned or enslaved</b>	<b>familiarity or openness in speech or behavior</b>	<b>the power or liberty to order one's own actions</b>
Oxford Dictionary	+	+	+	-
Cambridge Dictionary	+	+	-	+
Collins English Dictionary	+	+	+	+
Macmillan Dictionary	+	+	-	+

It has turned out that the basic meanings are practically identical in each of the dictionaries under analysis, which allows us to come to the conclusion that the consciousness of the American linguosociety contains a common perception and understanding of this concept. The basic meanings of the lexical unit «freedom» are «*to make your own decisions, and express your own opinions*» and «*the state of not being imprisoned or*

*enslaved*», which underlines ambivalence of the concept presentation: psychological freedom («*do what you want, make your own decisions and express your own opinion*»), and physical freedom («*not being imprisoned or enslaved*»).

To prove the existence of this perception of the concept *freedom* in the mindset of the representatives of the Beat – Generation we resorted to the method of continuous sampling of quotations from the literary works under analysis. It has turned out that for the young American of the 50-60s of the XX century freedom is associated with mental and physical varieties: it presupposes absence of restrictions on how to live, how to spend time, what moral rules to follow, as well as intended choice of a chaotic life style of a permanent traveler without a definite purpose or route.

The language world view of the American youth of the 50-60s of the XX century can be represented as a multi-level system, depending on the interaction of different concepts within. The concept *freedom* has a direct impact on relatively specific concepts (*home, road*). Coexistence of these concepts in the linguistic consciousness of the American youth of that period of time presupposes that freedom for the Beat – Generation is equal to being always on the road, which may be symbolized as their real home. The concepts *madness* and *addiction* are labeled as absolutely specific concepts because they are connected with freedom only in individual authors' perception: for J. Kerouac, freedom realizes itself through madness, and for W. S. Burroughs, drug and alcohol addiction allows a person to get devoid of mental restrictions and provide genuine freedom.

All the above-mentioned concepts constitute a conceptual integrity and characterize the young American of the 50-60s of the XX century as a person who wishes to prove the importance of the struggle to acquire true freedom from imposed limitations in various areas of life by using different methods and ways. Thus, the language world view of the American youth of that period of time is a well – structured system of concepts that are considered to be a manifestation of ideas about the world, expressed through various language means.

## REFERENCES

1. Попова З.Д. Когнитивная лингвистика / З.Д. Попова, И.А. Стернин. – М.: АСТ: Восток – Запад. – 2007 – 315 с.
2. Степанов Ю.С. Константы: Словарь русской культуры: Изд. 2-е, испр. и доп [Текст] / Ю.С. Степанов. – М.: Академический проект, 2001 – 590 с.